

Curbing the C.I.A.

When so sophisticated a fighter for political and intellectual freedom as Norman Thomas finds himself a dupe of the Central Intelligence Agency, it becomes plain that no one can be sure what the outer limits of C.I.A. penetration have been—or, indeed, whether there were any outer limits.

Mr. Thomas headed an institute designed to foster left-wing democracy in Latin America; many members of its faculty were openly critical of United States policy. Yet, with no awareness by Mr. Thomas or his associates, most of the money to finance their activities was coming from C.I.A. through one of its foundation fronts.

From all indications, the agency never insinuated itself into the institute's operational structure; but it maintained no such detachment in other cases that have come to light. The most conspicuous was the revelation that the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employes had, in effect, turned its International Affairs Department over to the C.I.A. in 1962 and 1963 to use as a base for strikes and other activities aimed at overthrowing Dr. Cheddi Jagan's Marxist regime in British Guinea.

The union's present president, Jerry Wurf, severed the C.I.A. tie soon after he took office in 1964. Mr. Wurf is an uncompromising anti-Communist, but he recognized the need for an unblurred line between his union and any imprint of Government domination. The A.F.L.-C.I.O., which ridiculed earlier reports of links between its overseas operations and the Intelligence Agency, has now decided it had better examine how separate the two really were.

All these developments make it essential that the report soon to be issued by President Johnson's Special Review Committee establish a clear and enforceable cut-off of clandestine C.I.A. support for nongovernmental organizations in education, labor, publishing and other fields. As long ago as 1960 a study group headed by former Assistant Secretary of Defense Mansfield D. Sprague recommended liquidation of such programs, with no affirmative response at the White House level.

The break should be conclusive now. The C.I.A. has many vital jobs to perform, but subverting domestic institutions is not one of them.